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Parent of two children with Big Brothers Big Sisters

Helena, MT

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Helena has been a very influential program throughout my 6 years here in Helena. Both of my children participate and have always enjoyed the friendships they have fostered through this program. And though they are still young and the influences of their "Bigs" may not yet be monumental, it has already had a lasting impression.

I am a single mother and to add to the fun challenges that all single mothers face, I have a rare auto-immune disorder that can wreak havoc on my daily life. I have been wheelchair bound and blindness is a common symptom. My kids are incredibly emotionally stable with this crazy disease and I credit a lot of that to the constant and kind support they get from their Bigs. My kids are straight A students, with a small circle of good friends and an active life filled with Boy Scouts, TaeKwonDo and Math-Olympics. They have definitely made me proud over the years and I'm sure they will continue to do so.

My daughter, Alexis, has been matched with a variety of college-age girls who have taken her to their dorm rooms and shown her the benefits of not only staying in school, but following through and attending college. My son, Erik, has been on many outdoor activities that Montana specializes in, but that I wouldn't have been able to do with him. He also does community service that gives him an appreciation of giving back.

The program has also worked with both of them within the elementary school system, having high school aged "buddies" that they can use as a mentor. As Erik gets ready for junior high next year, he has been relying on them to calm his jitters and ease his mind.

What I really want to leave with you is how much these people have been able to help out a couple of kids who probably would have struggled with life. They started out with the short straw, a father who dropped off when they were toddlers and a mother who struggles in and out of a wheelchair on a regular basis, but somehow they have been able to do well. Not just well, but incredibly successful and so much of that is the regular constant contact with someone in their life who actually cares about them and their situation. BBBS isn't just about taking a kid to go have fun, it's about building a lifetime bond with someone that doesn't have to get on you to clean your room or do your homework.

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